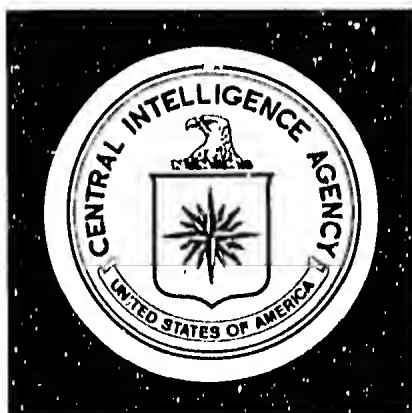


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**Secret**



OFFICE OF  
NATIONAL ESTIMATES

O. N. E.  
MEMORANDUM

*Some Worrisome Developments in the Horn of Africa*

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2 February 1973

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# CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

## OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

2 February 1973

### SOME WORRISOME DEVELOPMENTS IN THE HORN OF AFRICA

*Conclusion B of NIE 75/76-72, The Horn of Africa, 4 October 1972, said: "From the US point of view the situation in the Horn appears more favorable than it has for many years. But much of this is transitory...." It was indeed very transitory. In the last couple of months the prospects for oil in the Ogaden (an Ethiopian territory claimed by Somalia) have improved, the USSR has stepped up military aid to Somalia and has begun constructing some military facilities of its own, and the Somali Government has revived its claims to Ethiopian territory. A week ago the Crown Prince of Ethiopia suffered a stroke, and thereby complicated the delicate Imperial succession issue. It is too early to assess with any precision the implications for Ethiopian stability of the Crown Prince's incapacity, but it almost certainly increases the chances of turmoil after Haile Selassie's death. All the events noted above are interrelated, and taken together they are likely to have a considerable impact on the Horn of Africa, and on US interests in the area.*

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*This memorandum was prepared in the Office of National Estimates and discussed with appropriate offices in CIA, which are in agreement with its principal judgments.*

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A. Ethiopian Apprehensions about the Ogaden

1. Ever since Somalia became independent in 1960 with a constitution calling for the political union of all Somali-inhabited lands (Greater Somalia) the Ethiopians have been apprehensive. At issue is control over the Ogaden, a large desert triangle in southeastern Ethiopia, flanked by Somali territory on two sides and inhabited almost entirely by nomadic Somalis. Until recently Ethiopian motives for holding the Ogaden were mainly pride and the fear that if one portion of the multinational Ethiopian Empire were to go, other peoples and provinces would seek to break away.

2. There is now an economic attraction in the Ogaden. A couple of weeks ago, Tenneco, a US firm, struck what appears to be a commercially exploitable deposit of natural gas and perhaps petroleum in a corner of the Ogaden, near the border which the Somalis have never recognized. The strike, even though its value is still uncertain, makes the Ogaden much more interesting to Tenneco, Ethiopia, Somalia, and perhaps also the US. Its proximity to the Somali "border" and the possibility of further discoveries make the Ethiopians more intent than ever to tighten control over all of the Ogaden.

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[REDACTED]

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Somalis are receiving sizable new shipments of weapons from the USSR, [REDACTED]

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capabilities of the Somali armed forces. The Soviets have provided small arms, artillery, trucks, and Mig-17 or Mig-19 planes, as well as four IL-28 light bombers (which matches the four Canberras which the Ethiopians bought some years back).

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[REDACTED]

4. US officials, military and diplomatic, have tried with only partial success to convince the Ethiopians that their fears of attack are exaggerated. The point has been made that, however imposing the Somali armament inventory appears on paper, their capabilities for large scale attack on Ethiopia are pretty suspect. The long distances involved, extreme shortages of fuel, lack of training, poor maintenance of equipment, and other logistical and personnel problems

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conspicuously hamper the effectiveness of the Somali forces. Most Ethiopian military leaders know this, but their fears are still real.

5. At least as worrisome to Ethiopians as the increased Somali armament is what they perceive as a much tougher Somali approach to irredentism. The spirit of detente which has governed Somali relations with its neighbors since 1966 is dissolving. The Greater Somalia theme, muted during the years of detente, is now used much more frequently and forcefully, both in Somali negotiations with Ethiopians at border control meetings and in the communiques of visiting foreign delegations to Mogadiscio. It is not clear why the Somali Government is now taking a more bellicose attitude towards its neighbors. To some extent it is probably an attempt by a shaky government to use a popular emotional issue to garner domestic support. Irredentism is one of the few unifying themes in a country where clan rivalries and individual jealousies predominate. Somalis take the Greater Somalia cause seriously.

6. Might the Somalis launch an attack on Ethiopia? In the present circumstances, this would be an act of desperation. President

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Siad and his cronies in the Somali Revolutionary Council face a host of insoluble problems but they do not appear desperate enough to start a war with their larger neighbor. They are frequently challenged by factions within the council, and cannot count on the loyalties of a sullen populace. They do count quite heavily on the support of the ever-growing Russian military assistance group. We do not know the attitude of the Soviets towards Somali irredentism, but in the past they have counselled caution and dissuaded the Somalis from aggressive acts against Ethiopia. Now that the Soviets have gained greater access to Somali facilities [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] they would not care to risk these advantages. The Soviets would gain little, even if the Somalis took over the Ogaden, and if the Somalis were defeated, the Soviet position there would be uncertain. It would, therefore, seem to be in the interest of the USSR to use whatever influence it has to restrain its clients.

7. In the short run, i.e., while Haile Selassie lives and conditions in Ethiopia are relatively stable, it would not be a surprise if the Somalis were to sponsor a low level guerrilla insurgency in the Ogaden. The terrain is suitable, the guerrilla candidates -- some trained in North Korea -- are available, and the risks to Mogadiscio would not be great. The Somali Government would not

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necessarily acknowledge sponsorship, but would provide considerable publicity to the exploits of "freedom fighters". An insurgency campaign in the Ogaden would tie up a good part of the Ethiopian Army's Third Division and add to the already considerable financial and logistical strains.

B. New Developments Affecting the Ethiopian Succession

8. Any consideration of the Ethiopian succession must take into account the virtually absolute powers of Haile Selassie and his dominance, even at the age of 80, over all aspects of public life in Ethiopia. Few Ethiopians in these circumstances are willing to reveal to foreigners -- perhaps not even to each other -- their views on politics and the succession. We do not know that factions have formed and taken positions. Furthermore, no one can say whether analogies with Ethiopian politics before Haile Selassie's accession to the throne are relevant to the situation that will prevail on his death.

9. Our recent estimate concluded that the odds favored Crown Prince Asfa Wossen's succession, but there was certain to be some turmoil in the process. This was not a difficult estimate to make. For some

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years conventional wisdom has focused on the apparent acceptance by virtually all important elements of Ethiopian society of the Crown Prince as heir to the throne. Haile Selassie has promoted the idea formally, and [REDACTED] he values peaceful 25X6 succession and continuity of Imperial institutions. The estimate that some turmoil would mark the succession was based upon consideration of the highly personal style of Haile Selassie, the tradition of challenges to a new claimant to the Ethiopian throne, and the proliferation in recent years of cliques and groups seeking modernization or modification of the Imperial structure.

10. But the situation has changed abruptly. Asfa Wossen suffered 25X1 a stroke on 27 January, and was flown to London for treatment. [REDACTED] 25X1

[REDACTED] X1 [REDACTED] It is up to Haile Selassie to decide whether to keep Asfa Wossen as heir-designate, or to choose another. The 1955 Constitution, which names the Crown Prince as heir to the throne, does not cover any other contingencies. Asfa Wossen's only son, Zara Yakob is a youth (20 years old) -- a grave disadvantage as a potential successor in a land where seniority is valued. Another

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possible candidate for the succession is Iskender Desta, the favorite grandson of Haile Selassie and *de facto* chief of the Ethiopian Navy. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] His political skills and leadership abilities are difficult to evaluate.

11. Asfa Wossen's stroke, in effect, throws open the whole succession issue. If there were some doubts earlier about the prospects for a smooth transition, these are now multiplied. Asfa Wossen before his stroke was hardly an inspiring candidate for the throne, but he did have the advantage of being the only son of the Emperor, and for decades his role as the designated heir was not challenged.

12. If Haile Selassie chooses a new heir, either a grandson or someone outside the family, this would help to regularize the succession, but it certainly would not assure it. Historically the hereditary principle has not been a prime consideration in the Imperial succession. Nor have the wishes of a reigning monarch always been respected. Genealogy counts for a great deal, however. A serious candidate for the throne must be able to claim direct descent from Menelik I, son of Solomon and Sheba. There are a number of Amharic and Tigrean families with acceptable ancestry, some of whose male members have Imperial aspirations.

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13. It has been more than 55 years since the last transfer of power, a violent and bitterly contested episode. Few besides Haile Selassie remember much about it. The church and the feudal nobility, however, are likely to be important in determining the succession. On the death of the Emperor, their views will weigh more heavily than any constitutional provision or the wishes of Haile Selassie. But the collective verdict of the armed services will probably be critical.

C. Outlook for a Post-Haile Selassie Ethiopia

14. The easiest estimate, and perhaps the best we can offer at this time, is that the death of Haile Selassie if it occurs in the next year or two will plunge Ethiopia into confusion. As we said in the last estimate -- should the armed forces and the establishment unite in support of the Crown Prince (or another candidate) then the transition to a new regime could be fairly smooth. At the moment, however, the chances for such unified action do not seem very bright. Unless the Emperor succeeds in quickly gaining support for a revised succession plan, there is likely to be a prolonged period of turmoil, with more than one claimant to the throne, and much jockeying for position and influence by the factions of the armed forces. On the whole, it

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seems likely that a monarchy of some kind will survive, and the country will not fragment. There is little prospect for a military seizure of power unless the contest for the throne were to appear insoluble.

15. In the October estimate we said that the Somalis might decide to test the intentions and firmness of the new regime, by stirring up trouble in the Ogaden or elsewhere. In view of the hardening of Somali attitudes, petroleum prospects, and the greater uncertainty over the succession in Addis, a better estimate would be that at the time of succession the Somalis will make a move in the Ogaden, and perhaps elsewhere as well.

16. It can also be assumed that the Eritrean insurgents will make a major attempt to wrest control of Eritrea from Imperial forces. For well over a year the Eritreans have been engaged in a factional conflict which has diverted their attention from the independence effort. This seems to be winding down. The Peoples Liberation faction with Libyan and other backing will probably prevail, and the insurgency will revive in some strength.

17. The outlook for US interests in the Horn of Africa is some shades bleaker than it appeared a few months ago. If the

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25X1 succession is seriously contested, to the point that groups are battling each other in Ethiopia, it is certain that one or more factions will appeal to the US for armed and other support. Some groups, irritated by the long association of Ethiopia and the US, would be likely to seek the backing of other major powers. In any event US policy makers will have to weigh a number of uncertain factors [redacted] and the risks involved in support for any Ethiopian factions. A prolonged state of confusion in Ethiopia would reduce the prestige and importance of that country in African affairs, and lessen the value for the US of an influential position there.

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